

296 LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

[Acr I

*Lady Windermere.* [Seated L C.] Oh, you mustn't think it is going to be a ball, Duchess. It is only a dance in honour of my birthday. A small and early.

*Lord Darlington.* [Standing L C.] Very small, very early, and very select, Duchess.

*Duchess of Berwick.* [On sofa L.] Of course it's going to be select. But we know that, dear Margaret, about your house. It is really one of the few houses in London where I can take Agatha, and where I feel perfectly secure about dear Berwick. I don't know what society is coming to. The most dreadful people seem to go everywhere. They certainly come to my parties—the men get quite furious if one doesn't ask them. Really, some one should make a stand against it.

*Lady Windermere.* I will, Duchess. I will have no one in my house about whom there is any scandal.

*Lord Darlington.* [R C.] Oh, don't say that, Lady Windermere. I should never be admitted!

[Sitting.

*Duchess of Berwick.* Oh, men don't matter. With women it is different. We're good. Some of us are, at least. But we are positively getting elbowed into the corner. Our husbands would really forget our existence if we didn't nag at them from time to time, just to remind them that we have a perfect legal right to do so.

*Lord Darlington.* It's a curious thing, Duchess, about the game of marriage—a game, by the way, that is going out of fashion—the wives hold all the honours, and invariably lose the odd trick.

*Duchess of Berwick.* The odd trick? Is that the husband, Lord Darlington?

*Lord Darlington.* It would be rather a good name for the modern husband.

*Duchess of Berwick.* Dear Lord Darlington, how thoroughly depraved you are!

*Lady Windermere.* Lord Darlington is trivial.

*Lord Darlington.* Ah, don't say that, Lady Windermere.

*Lady Windermere.* Why do you talk so trivially about life, then?

*Lord Darlington.* Because I think that life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it. [Moves up

C.

*Duchess of Berwick.* What does he mean? Do, as a concession to my poor wits, Lord Darlington, just explain to me what you really mean.

*Lord Darlington.* [Coming down back of table.] I think I had better not, Duchess. Nowadays to be intelligible is to be